gratify their own selfish desires. They launched the hypocritical slogan "The war will make the world safe for democracy", while they proceeded to make the world, as they believed, safe for bureaucracy. The coming of Christ and his kingdom was entirely ignored, and, like their father the Devil, they said: 'The world is ours, and we will rule it, and let us patriotically stand together and rule for ourselves.'

[23] The Baal priests, which, of course, included the Levites, had accumulated some money at the house of worship, or church house, called "the house of Baal-berith", at Shechem, and now the enthusiastic king-making mob marched up to where the clergy carried on their operations, and the clergy showed their appreciation of the situation and their willingness to co-operate. "And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him."—Judg. 9:4.

[24] That was money devoted to devil worship, and it was readily produced and used to push the campaign of Abimelech. Likewise when the commercial and political element launched the World War, the real purpose of which was to provide a sure means for themselves to rule, the clergy of "Christendom" from their pulpits shouted: "We have red blood in our veins, we are patriotic citizens, and we therefore support this campaign for the war. Fork out your money."

[25] They turned their church houses into recruiting stations and sold Liberty Bonds and thrift stamps, and collected money for the war, and aided in putting Big Business in complete control, and the result today is that in the land of "Christendom" the dictators are in the saddle. With the money Abimelech received from the clergy he hired "sluggers" (as one translator puts it, "loose and unstable men") to join him in a murderous campaign against those who might be in his way. Their modern counterpart is found in the hired gunmen and strong-arm squad who carry out the wishes of the heartless ruling element and inflict punishment upon God's faithful witnesses.

[26] The seventy legitimate sons of Gideon might be in the way of the schemes of the ambitious Abimelech, and therefore he reasoned that they must be put out of the way: "And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself." (Judg. 9:5) This bloody deed was the overt act of a conspiracy formed at Shechem against the house of Gideon. (Judg. 9:24, 57) Likewise during the World War the selfish commercial and political element, riding in the saddle that they might gain complete rule of the world by a dictatorship, conspired to put out of the way the "pestiferous" followers of Christ Jesus who persisted in proclaiming the message of God's kingdom, and that his kingdom is at hand and is the only hope of the world. All of the legitimate sons of Gideon, except Jotham, the youngest, were slain on "one stone". That one stone pictured Christ Jesus, the foundation stone of Jehovah's royal house and which is the basis for God's capital organization. (Matt. 16:18; Ps. 118:22) During the World War the faithful servants of God stood firmly for Jehovah's Stone, his King. It was for that reason, and upon this Foundation Stone, that the work of the faithful was killed in 1918; and this was done by the commercial and political elements, aided and abetted by the clergy and the "man of sin" class. (Rev. 11:7, 8) Some of the faithful servants of Jehovah were actually killed during the World War because of their faithfulness unto God and his King.

[27] Abimelech, with his murderous strong-arm squad, killed the sons of Gideon, including Jether the firstborn, but Jotham, the youngest, escaped because he hid himself. The name "Jotham" means "Jehovah is perfect". He seems to picture, first, those whom during the World War Jehovah preserved, that is, the faithful ones that survived the persecution, and which are also pictured by Mordecai and Naomi. These were hid from the face of the Serpent Dragon by fleeing into the wilderness for 1,260 days, that is to say, from 1919 to September 8, 1922. (Rev. 12:6, 14, *Light*, Book One, page 246) Those faithful ones are the ones that the Lord made his "faithful and wise servant" class, together with others who afterwards were taken in, and are constituted the remnant. Jehovah preserved Jotham for his purpose, and likewise he has preserved the remnant.

[28] The big "bosses" in Shechem then led the king-making mob to the house of Millo, in Shechem, which was a fort or garrison. They did not assemble there to protest against the wanton and wicked slaughter of the sixty-nine innocent sons of Gideon, but to there perform the "patriotic duty" of making the selfish, covetous, murderous and ambitious man their king and their tool for their use. "And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain [by the oak, *margin*] of the pillar that was in Shechem." (Judg. 9:6) The oak tree by the pillar, there mentioned, pictures Satan's organization, "the big tree," under which all unclean and cruel deeds are practiced. The coronation of the self-chosen king Abimelech did not take place at the tabernacle or temple which God had provided for the Israelites, but at that place which represented Satan's stronghold. (2 Sam. 18:18; 2 Ki. 17:10) Likewise immediately following the World War, and after the Elijah work had been killed, "Christendom" rejoiced, while further rejecting Jehovah's King and his kingdom message, and, while going contrary to God's Word, set up the League of Nations in the place and stead of the Kingdom, and the clergy shouted at that the coronation: 'The League of Nations is the expression of God's kingdom.' Since then other commercial subterfuges have been brought

into existence to aid in keeping the selfish tools of Big Business in power.

29 Jotham, the only surviving legitimate son of Gideon, was in hiding when he learned what had happened. Likewise, in 1919, when the League of Nations, the tool of the selfish interests, was anointed and installed, Jehovah's faithful servant class was in hiding but, like Jotham, they were informed of what was taking place. "And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried [under inspiration proclaimed], and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you." (Judg. 9:7) Mount Gerizim was the place from which the blessings were pronounced by Jehovah as recorded in Deuteronomy; while the curses were pronounced from Mount Ebal opposite, or on the north. (Deut. 27:11-13; Josh. 8:30-33) A mountain is symbolic of the kingdom of God or God's royal organization, but Mount Gerizim here seems clearly to picture the kingdom or capital organization of Jehovah upon which the feet of Jehovah's servants now stand while they proclaim God's message of warning and of good tidings to those who have a hearing ear. It is the "feet" of the Greater Gideon, Christ Jesus, standing upon the mountains, that now deliver the testimony of Jesus Christ by the grace of God.—Isa. 52:7; 40:9; Rev. 12:17.

30 Jotham, while standing upon that craggy peak of the mountain, would be out of reach of the enemy, who would slay him if they could lay hands on him, and thus Jotham would be in a position to readily escape when pursued. In that position Jotham pictured the remnant of Jehovah now in the secret place of the Most High, and from which place of security they constantly proclaim the message of the Lord. (Ps. 91:1, 2) Jotham's position high up in the mountain would enable him to so speak that he could be easily heard by the coronation mob assembled below, then making Abimelech king. This living picture corresponds with the words of Jesus addressed to his faithful followers: "What I tell you in darkness [secret place of the temple], that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." (Matt. 10:27) Jotham cried out: 'Ye men [*baalim* owners and bosses], hear me, that God may hearken unto you.' Likewise God causes the ruling elements of Satan's organization to receive notice and warning delivered by his witnesses, and having received the same these selfish men are held responsible by Jehovah for their utterances, propaganda, and actions, which actions speak louder than their words. As Jotham made that coronation multitude hearken, so now Jehovah's witnesses, by the grace of God, cause Big Business, the politicians, and the clergy to hear the declaration of and concerning Jehovah's purposes. Hypocritical Christians, including the "man of sin" class, have repeatedly insisted that Jehovah's witnesses should say nothing about the commercial and political elements of this world, because, say they, such ruling elements constitute the higher powers that rule and to such higher powers all should be subject. In that, as in all other matters, they are wrong. Here is clearly a prophetic picture showing that the remnant of the servant class now on the earth must cry out to those who have set up the "abomination of desolation" in the place of God's kingdom, and must sound the warning to the people, telling them the facts, that they might flee to the only place of safety.

31 Standing upon that high mountain Jotham, under inspiration from God, spoke the parabolical "prophecy of the trees". For many long centuries that prophecy has been sealed. Like the other prophecies of God's Word, it could not be understood until after its fulfillment had begun. That time now clearly seems to have come, and Jehovah graciously unfolds the prophecy of the "trees", that those who are truly devoted to him may hear and understand and deport themselves accordingly. What, then, is the meaning of the prophecy spoken by Jotham? and what relation has it to Jehovah's witnesses?

(To be continued)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

¶ 1, 2. What was Jehovah's purpose in making prophetic pictures and preserving record thereof? When, where, and to whom does he reveal the meaning of these prophetic pictures? Who are designated as "trees of righteousness", and what is the responsibility attending their being so identified?

¶ 3. Account for Jehovah's now making known to the remnant the meaning of his prophecies long ago written in the Bible.

¶ 4. Relate the parable concerning the trees.

¶ 5-7. Identify the trees and the vine, the city, and the persons mentioned in the parable.

¶ 8. With scriptures, point out the evidence that the fulfillment of this prophetic parable began after 1914, and further development thereof about 1918.

¶ 9-13. What are the facts to show that in their course of action as recorded in Judges 8:33-35 Israel pictured "Christendom"?

¶ 14, 15. Account for Lucifer's attempt at self-exaltation. How has this same form of selfishness found expression in ambitious rulers under leadership of Satan? Show, with scriptures, the proper course for those in a covenant to do God's will, and whether such course has been followed by those who have been in that covenant.

¶ 16, 17. Who was Abimelech? According to his name, whom did he picture? How has this been manifest in "Christendom"? Point out how the relationship of Abimelech to Gideon fits in the prophetic picture.

¶ 18. Account for the selfish procedure of Abimelech as recorded in Judges 9:1. What do the Scriptures contain of important facts concerning Shechem which bring it fittingly into the picture?

¶ 19, 20. Apply that part of the picture presented in verse 2.

¶ 21. How does verse 3 find fulfillment?

¶ 22-24. What on the part of the clergy of "Christendom" marks fulfillment of that part of the picture described in verse 4?

¶ 25-27. Describe what has taken place in "Christendom" as foreshown in the first part of verse 5. How does the latter part of this verse have fulfillment?

¶ 28. How in "Christendom" have "the men of Shechem" 'gathered together and made Abimelech king by the oak of the pillar in Shechem'?

¶ 29-31. Point out fulfillment of verse 7.